

SELFIDGE FIELD, BUILDING NO. 3899
(Target Butt for Testing Machine Guns & Cannon)
(Bore Siting Weapons Building)
(Machine Gun Impact Building)
E. of Taxiway A, W. of Ammo Rd.
Mt. Clemens vicinity
Macomb County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-116-V

HAER
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50-MITCLE.V
IV-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Great Lakes Systems Office
Department of the Interior
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102-2571

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SELFRIDGE FIELD
BUILDING #3899, TARGET BUTT FOR TESTING
AIRPLANE MACHINE GUNS AND CANNON

HAER No. MI-116-V

(Bore Siting Weapons Building; Machine Gun Impact Building)

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: East of Taxiway A, south of Small Arms Range
Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mt. Clemens vicinity,
Macomb County, Michigan

Quad/UTM: U.S.G.S. Mt. Clemens East Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.350020.4719000

Date of Construction: 1943

Present Owner: Air National Guard
3500 Fetchet Avenue
Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland 20762

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: This building served as an aircraft armament targeting
facility from World War II through the early Cold War
period. It is therefore directly associated with Selfridge's
combat readiness training mission as defined by national
defense directives. It retains its architectural and functional
integrity and is an extremely rare site type in Michigan.

Historian: William Rutter, Midwest Environmental Consultants, May,
1996

II. HISTORY

This building was built in 1943 from plans provided by the War Department, Office of the Chief of Engineers-Construction Division, Washington, D.C.¹ Aircraft would be anchored in front of this building and fire 30 caliber or 37mm machine guns into a cross hair target suspended by target hangers from this building's facade. The interior of the building was filled with sand and its facade covered with 1 inch by 6 inch planks to capture errant rounds. The machine guns would be adjusted based on results of firing. It was used prior to the replacement of machine guns and cannon as the primary armament on fighter aircraft during the 1950s.² In later years it has served as an open storage facility and is currently vacant.

III. DESCRIPTION

Building #3899 is a single story, rectangular plan, 60 foot wide by 29 feet 6 inches deep, flat-roofed structure whose roof is partially covered with earth and is pierced by concrete ventilation stacks. It is constructed of three foot thick,

¹Original construction plans, the War Department, Office of the Chief of Engineers-Construction Division, Washington, D.C., 1943.

² Interview, Eric Reeve, Selfridge Environmental Management, October 12, 1995.

rebar-reinforced concrete walls whose interior elevations are faced by two rows of 1 inch by 10 inch wide vertical wood pilings. Its facade is composed of an open entry void whose perimeters are faced by vertical wood piling, while its roof is pierced by six 18 inch diameter filling pipes which were used to fill up the interior of the bore siting building with sand to capture the spent targeting munitions. Targets used to site machine guns and cannons were suspended from steel tracks within the ceiling in the entry void at the front of the building. Concrete aprons in front of the void contained wheel pits and tie downs to secure aircraft during armament siting procedures.

IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

Anonymous, Brief History of Selfridge Air Force Base, 1917-1960, unpublished ms., Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1960.

Nigro, Louis, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, An Unofficial History, unpublished ms., Public Information Office, Selfridge ANG Base, Michigan, 1977.

B. PLANS

Original construction drawing, dated August 28, 1942, War Department Office of the Chief of Engineers, Construction Division, in possession of Selfridge Base Museum, Mt. Clemens, Michigan. Plan of Aprons and Taxiways, Sheet 1 of 3 Sheets, Drawing No. 148/4-1, SF 1/141.

Selfridge Field, Bldg No. 3899
(Target Butt for Testing
Machine Guns and Cannon)
HAER No. MI-116-V
Page 4

Original construction drawing, dated February 6, 1942, War Department Office of the Chief of Engineers, Construction Division in possession of Selfridge Base Museum, Mt. Clemens, Michigan. Plan, Elevation, Section, Sheet 2 of 3 Sheets, Drawing No. 148/4-2, SF 1/141.

C. INTERVIEWS

Eric Reeve, Environmental Management, Selfridge, October 12, 1995

Colonel Robert Stone (Ret.), Curator, Selfridge Base Museum, October 13, 1995